Manual

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1 Welcome to ACTION STRIKES!

Thank you for purchasing ACTION STRIKES. On behalf of the Native Instuments team, we hope this new KONTAKT Instrument truly inspires you.

ACTION STRIKES is a cinematic percussion library for KONTAKT 5 or the free KONTAKT PLAYER. The instruments are presented in custom designed interfaces to inspire creativity and make the production process quick and easy.

This manual will give you an overview of the included instruments.

1.1 About ACTION STRIKES

ACTION STRIKES continues from where ACTION STRINGS left off, with a similar set of tools designed specifically for big screen action and suspense, only now focusing on cinematic percussion including: orchestral percussion, concert toms, taiko drums, and other ethnic percussion instruments.

The included rhythmic patterns are all generated internally using custom KONTAKT scripts. Since no audio loops are used, the patterns can be played at any tempo without artifacts. This also means that the patterns can make use of alternating samples for the same hit type, giving added realism to the library.

1.2 The Included Instruments

ACTION STRIKES includes three different nki files, each designed for different production or performance styles and with individual interfaces to complement these styles:

- **Ensemble** - Multiple percussion instruments, complete with pattern playback, a mixer, and effects.
- **Hits** - Individual percussive hits, designed to be played directly from your MIDI keyboard or DAW.
- **Instrument** - Individual Percussion sets, with simple articulations, rhythms, and effects.

2 Using the Ensemble.nki

The Ensemble instrument is the largest of the included instruments. It includes three sections (Low, Mid, and High) that can be triggered individually or together, as well as a large collection of preset rhythms crafted for the big screen.

From the interface you can load one of 12 different drum ensembles, or you can mix and match the different sections from these ensembles to create your own custom ensemble.

2.1 Mapping and Playback

Each ensemble comes with five preset patterns, which are triggered from MIDI keys. Different rhythmic accents can be selected using key switches to create very different feeling variations of these patterns.

The Keyboard mapping for the Ensemble instrument is split into 5 sections:

- **C1** - **A1** are keyswitches to select from the included accent patterns.
- **C2** - **B2** trigger all three sections simultaneously.
- **C3** - **B3** trigger the low section.
- **C4** - **B4** trigger the mid section.
- **C5** - **B5** trigger the high section.

Within each trigger octave the first 5 white keys trigger rhythmic loops based on the selected ensemble and accent pattern; the last 2 white keys (A and B) trigger single hits.

2.2 The Ensemble User Interface

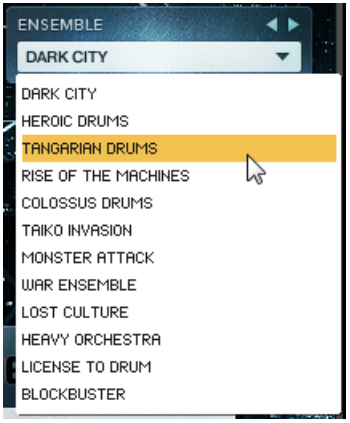
The Ensemble User Interface

At the top of the Performance view, below the usual KONTAKT Instrument header controls, you will notice two boxes:

- EXPRESSION/ACCENT: This box is located to the top left and contains two sliders that are linked to the Mod Wheel and Pitch Bend controls, which control the expression and accent intensity of the instruments.
- ENSEMBLE: The box to the right displays the currently loaded ensemble.

You can load an ensemble by either:

► Clicking on the dropdown menu and selecting the desired ensemble.



► Using the left and right arrows to cycle through the ensembles.

Navigation

The Navigation Tabs

Four tabs at the bottom of the Performance view enable you to change the contents of the central area:

- PLAYBACK: Displays the controls used to alter the pattern playback behavior.
- RHYTHM 1-5 and RHYTHM 6-10: Display the accent patterns that are assigned to the respective key-switches. You can also select patterns from these pages.

- ENS & MIXER: Displays the controls that affect the sound of the instrument (like audio effects and microphone position).

2.2.1 Rhythm Sets (RHYTHM 1-5 and RHYTHM 6-10)

The Rhythm Sets Page

Clicking on the tabs RHYTHM 1-5 and RHYTHM 6-10 will not only display the currently loaded accent rhythms, but will also display the controls that allow you to load different rhythm sets and individual rhythm patterns.

RHYTHM 1-5 is the default open page when you first load the instrument.

The Rhythm Sets Browser

Rhythm Sets are presets that contain 5 related rhythms. The rhythms are loaded into the first 5 slots (C1-E1) and the second 5 slots (F1-A1) are left unchanged.

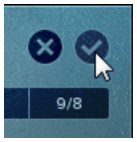
To load a preset Rhythm Set from the RHYTHM 1-5 page:

1. Click on the magnifying glass icon to the right of the Rhythm Sets title, this will open the Rhythm Sets Browser.

2. By default, all themes will be displayed in the browser. To further refine the displayed themes, click on any of the category buttons at the top of the browser.

3. Select a rhythm set by clicking on its name in the browser.

4. To load the currently selected rhythm set, click on the Tick button at the top right.



If you wish to exit the Theme Browser without changing the currently loaded theme or phrases, just click on the X button to the top right of the browser.

► Alternatively, you can cycle through the included Rhythm Sets, without entering the browser, by clicking on the left and right arrows to the left of the Rhythm Set title.

Although you cannot save your own themes, your theme settings are saved with the KONTAKT Instrument and therefore will also be saved with your host project.

The Rhythm Controls and Browser

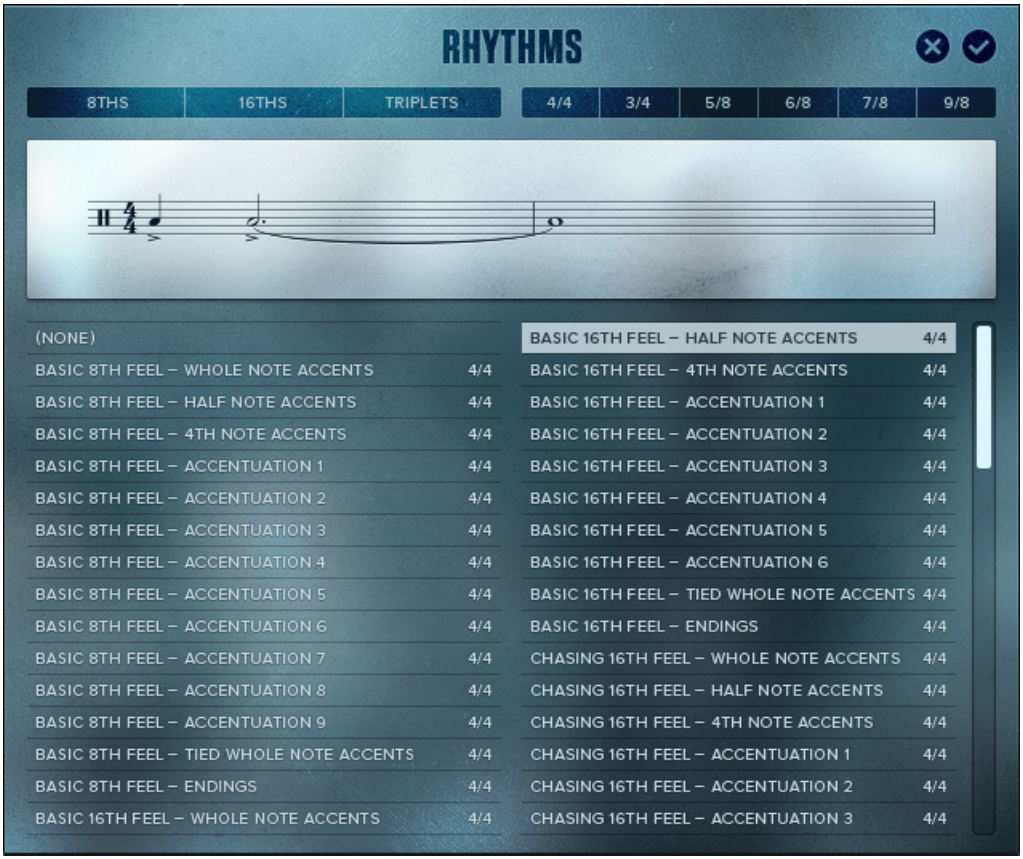
A preset Rhythm Set might not meet your exact needs, you may wish to change a rhythm, or load additional rhythms into any of the additional 5 slots.

On the pages accessed by clicking on the tabs RHYTHM 1-5 and RHYTHM 6-10, you will see the musical notations of the accent patterns loaded into these slots; to their left is the name of the key-switch to which they are assigned. These musical notations are actually interactive elements:

► To display the information on any rhythm, including the name and meter information, hover the mouse cursor over the musical notation of the rhythm.

Slots 6-10 will initially be empty, and display empty musical staves. These are still interactive in the same way as the other notations in slots 1-5.

► To load a rhythm into a slot, open the Rhythm Browser by clicking on the phrase notation/information.



The Rhythms Browser

The Rhythms Browser is similar to the Rhythm Set Browser in many ways:

- To the top of the browser are a series of buttons to refine your search.
- To the very top right are the **X** and **Tick** buttons used to exit the browser or load a rhythm respectively.
- The body of the browser contains a list of the available rhythms.

However, the Rhythm Browser has **two noticeable differences**:

- Clicking on a rhythm will **display the score for the phrase in the display** box above the browser list (in the above capture, the notation displayed is that of the *Basic 16th Feel - Half Note Accents* rhythm).
- Clicking on a rhythm will also **play a preview** of the selected rhythm.

Rhythms are loaded in the same manner as loading a Rhythm Set:

1. Select the desired Rhythm from the list in the Rhythm Browser by clicking on its name.
2. Confirm the selection by clicking the tick button to the top right of the Browser.

→ The selected Phrase will now be loaded into the slot you used to access the Phrase Browser.

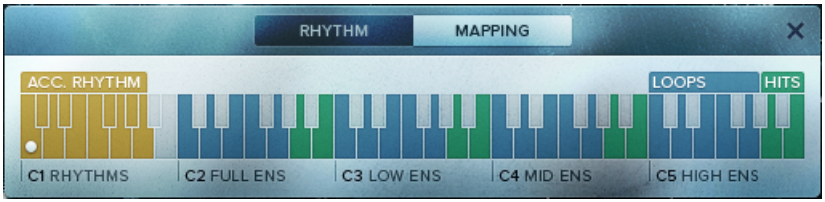
Rhythm and Mapping Monitor

► Clicking on the i button in the main rhythm banner will open the Rhythm and Mapping Monitor window.

The Rhythm Monitor

By default, the first monitor displayed will be the Rhythm Monitor. This shows a notation of the currently selected rhythmic pattern.

► Clicking on the MAPPING button opens the Mapping Monitor.



The Mapping Monitor

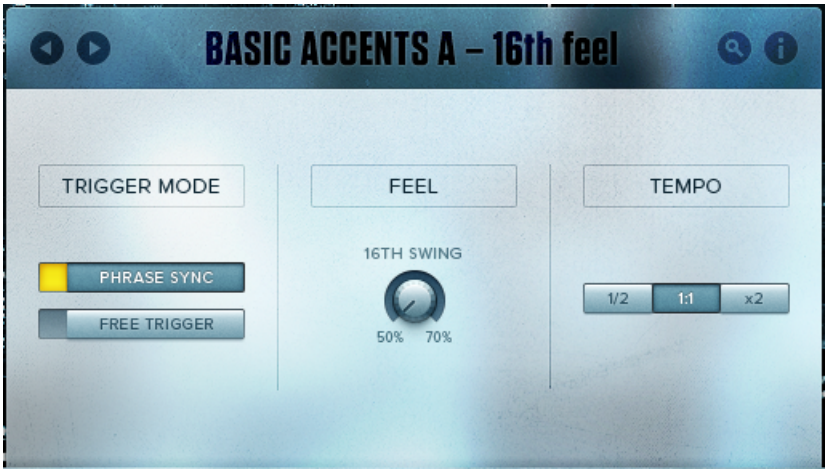
The Mapping Monitor displays an illustration of the MIDI keyboard mapping of the Ensemble instrument. The white dot highlights currently active key-switches or notes.

► To close the Monitor, click on the X button to the top right of the window.

> Neither the Rhythm nor the Mapping monitors are interactive. They are for reference only.

2.2.2 The PLAYBACK Page

By clicking on the PLAYBACK Tab, you will display the Playback page.



The Playback Page

This page contains three settings that affect the way the phrases are played back in the KONTAKT Instrument:

- TRIGGER MODE: There are two Trigger Modes, selected by clicking on the two buttons. These modes are:
  - PHRASE SYNC: Newly triggered phrases will have their start position offset to match the currently playing phrases, making sure that everything plays in sync.
  - FREE TRIGGER: Newly triggered phrases are always triggered from the beginning, ignoring the current playback position of any currently playing loops.
- FEEL: The 16TH SWING knob in this area controls the amount of delay applied to the off-beat hits. Increasing this control can make the rhythm feel more laid-back, or even give it a triplet feel.
- TEMPO: Here you can select between 3 tempo ratios 1/2 (Half), 1:1 (Normal), or x2 (Double), which affect the phrase playback speed relative to the master (or host) tempo.

At the top of the Playback page you still have access to the Rhythm Set controls, allowing you to browse and load Rhythm Sets without returning to the Rhythm pages.

2.2.3 The ENS & MIXER Page

By clicking on the ENS & MIXER Tab, you will display the Ensemble and Mixer page.

The Ensemble and Mixer Page

As suggested by the name, this page has two main functions for controlling the final sound of the ensemble:

- Changing the source samples by selecting different ensemble sections.
- Altering and fine-tuning the output using the mixer and effects.

Changing the Ensemble Sections

As mentioned earlier in this manual, it is possible to browse and load any one of 12 ensembles from the ENSEMBLE box to the top right of the interface. However, from the Ensemble and Mixer page, it is also possible to alter these ensembles by changing the different sections individually.

To change an ensemble section:

1. Locate the section you wish to change in the mixer
2. Click on the dropdown at the top of the mixer channel to display the available sample sets

3. Select and click on the sample set you wish to load

→ The sample sets will be exchanged, and the name in the ENSEMBLE dropdown will change to *CUSTOM*

> ⚠ This custom ensemble is not saved, and will be deleted from the menu when you load a full ensemble.

The Mixer

The ACTION STRIKES Mixer features:

- Three channels - one for each of the ensemble sections
- Four insert effects per channel: Filter, EQ, Transient Master, Compressor
- Two send effects: Reverb and Delay
- A Master Bus, featuring the same four insert effects as the channels

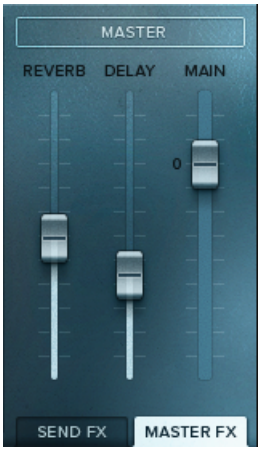
Each ensemble section has its own channel in the mixer.

The High Section Channel Strip

Each channel includes the following controls:

- REVERB: controls the amount of signal sent from the channel to the reverb effect.
- DELAY: controls the amount of signal sent from the channel to the delay effect.
- MIC: controls the balance between the close and room microphone sources.
- STEREO: controls the stereo width of the channel. Setting the knob to the left turns the channel to mono, a middle setting is the original stereo signal, and moving the knob to the right increases the stereo image.
- LEVEL: controls the output level of the channel.

To the right of the mixer are the two return channels and the master bus.



The Master Busses

- REVERB: controls the output level of the reverb effect.
- DELAY: controls the output level of the delay effect.
- MAIN: controls the final output of all channels and effects.

Channel and Master Effects

Each channel, including the master bus, has its own effect chain.

You can select an effect chain to display by:

► clicking on the tab at the bottom of the channel.

► The effects and controls available to you are:

- **FILTER** - two filters for tonal shaping.

  - HIGH PASS: sets the cutoff frequency of the high pass filter, removing all frequencies below this point. It can be used to remove bass frequencies and make the sound more "thin".
  - LOW PASS: sets the cutoff frequency of the low pass filter, removing frequencies above this point. It can be used to remove high frequencies and make the sound more "dull" or "warm".

- **EQ** - a 2-band parametric equalizer.

Each band has the same controls:

  - GAIN: controls the gain of the frequency band. The gain is at unity when the knob is in the middle position.
  - FREQ: controls the central frequency of the band.
  - BW: controls the width of the frequency band. Higher values give a wider band, and lower values make the band narrower.

- **TRANSIENTS** - an envelope shaping effect based on the TRANSIENT MASTER effect.

  - ATTACK: controls the level of the initial attack of the sound.
  - SUSTAIN: controls the level of the sustaining or decaying end of the sound.
- **COMPRESSOR** - a dynamic leveling effect, used to control and alter changes in volume.

  - THRESHOLD: sets the level above which the compressor starts to take effect.
  - ATTACK: sets the time it takes for the compressor to take effect after the signal exceeds the theshold level.
  - RELEASE: sets the time it takes for the compressor to return to normal after the signal dips below the theshold.

Each effect can be toggled on or off by clicking on the switch beside the effect name.

Send Effects

The controls for the send effects are accessed by clicking on the SEND FX tab in the mixer.

The Send FX Controls

There are two send effects with the following controls:

- **DELAY** - can be thought of as an echo effect that can be used to create rhythmic effects or add space to the sound.
  - TIME: sets the time between the input signal and the delayed signal.
  - FEEDBACK: controls the amount of signal fed from the output back into the input of the effect. In other words: controls the number of repeating echoes.
  - DAMP: controls the high frequency dampening in the delayed signal.
- **REVERB** - a space simulation effect. The included reverb is based on a convolution engine that uses impulse response samples to give a realistic representation of a space.
  - **IR Selection**: The dropdown menu allows you to select any of 10 different impulse response samples. You can also cycle through the samples using the left and right arrows.

2.3 Controlling Expression and Accents

▶ To control the dynamics of the phrases in real-time, use the modulation wheel (Mod Wheel, MIDI controller 1) of your MIDI keyboard, or move the modulation wheel of KONTAKT's on-screen keyboard.

▶ To set the dynamics to a fixed value, use the ModW. slider to the top left of the user interface.

Note that you cannot automate this control as it could interfere with the Mod Wheel signal.

You can **adjust the intensity of the rhythmic accents** by using the MIDI Pitch Bend control:

- Moving the pitch bend up will increase the intensity of the accents.
- Moving the pitch bend down will decrease the intensity of the accents.
- Leaving the pitch bend control in a neutral position will set the intensity of the accents to the default value.

► As with the Mod Wheel, you can also set the accent intensity to a fixed value by using the PitchW. slider to the top left of the user interface.

3 Using the Hits.nki

The Hits Instrument is the most simple of the ACTION STRIKES instruments. It allows you to play the different sounds directly from your MIDI keyboard or DAW. It is most useful if you want to compose or perform your own percussive sequences rather than using preset rhythms.

3.1 Playing the Instrument

- The Hits Instrument is played by using the MIDI keys C2 to B4
- Expression (or dynamics) is controlled via the Mod Wheel (MIDI CC1)

3.2 The Hits User Interface

The Hits interface features a similar layout to the Ensemble interface, but with a very different control set.

The Hits User Interface

To the top left is the EXPRESSION box, which features the ModW. slider that mimics the position of the mod wheel. It can also be used to set the expression to a set value.

The HIT SET box to the top right can be used to browse and load sample sets. You can select and load a hit set by either:

- clicking on the dropdown menu and selecting from the available options,

► or by cycling through the sets using the left and right arrows.

3.2.1 The HIT Page

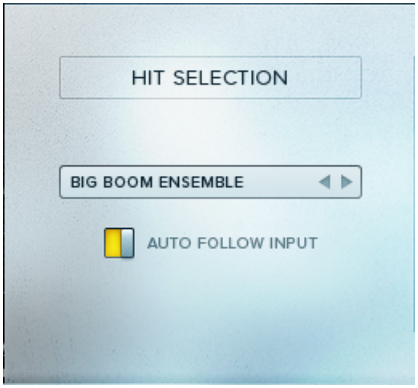
The Hit Page is the first page you will see when you open the instrument. It contains the main controls for the different percussive hits.

The top banner of the page mimics the HIT SET box, displaying the currently loaded hit set.

► You can browse through hit sets by clicking on the left and right arrows beside the displayed name.

HIT SELECTION

The left side of the page is where you can view or define the selected hit.



The Hit Selection Controls

To select a hit either:

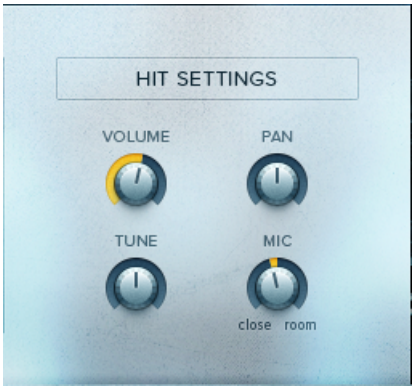
► play the corresponding MIDI note (making sure AUTO FOLLOW INPUT is active),

► or cycle to the hit using the left and right arrows in the hit selection display

The AUTO FOLLOW INPUT switch allows you to select whether or not the selected hit should respond in incoming MIDI.

HIT SETTINGS

In the right side of the page you can find the Hit Settings.



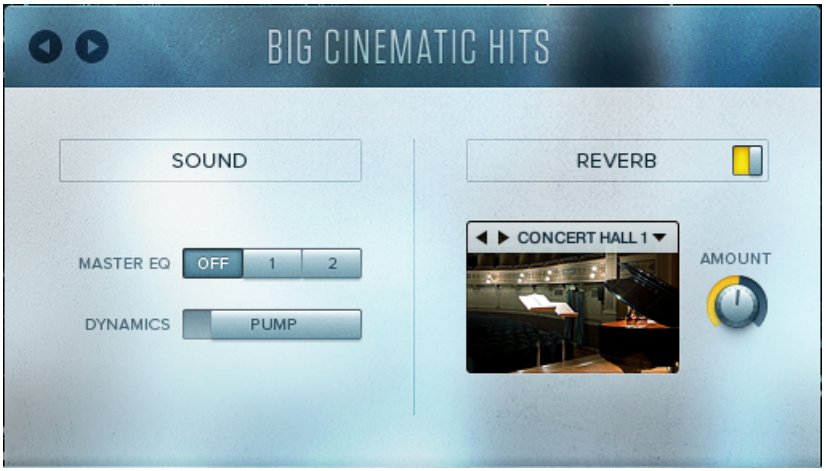
The Hit Settings Controls

These control a variety of parameters for each hit:

- VOLUME: controls the volume level of the selected hit.
- PAN: controls the stereo positioning of the selected hit.
- TUNE: controls the tuning of the selected hit.
- MIC: controls the balance between the close and room microphone sources.

3.2.2 The EFFECTS Page

You can access the Effects Page by clicking on the EFFECTS tab at the bottom of the interface.



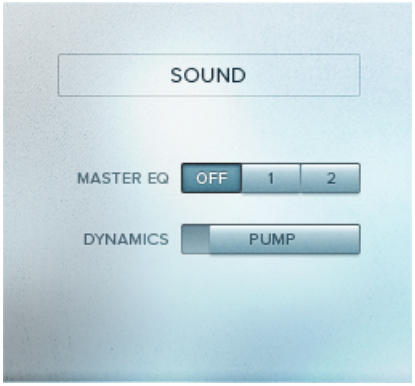
The Effects Page

This page gives you access to simple and intuitive effects to quickly shape the sound of the hit set.

> Like the Hit Page, the top banner of the page displays the selected hit set with browsing arrows.

SOUND

The left side of the page contains the sound controls, which comprise of two effects: MASTER EQ and DYNAMICS.



The Sound Controls

The MASTER EQ gives you a choice between three EQ settings:

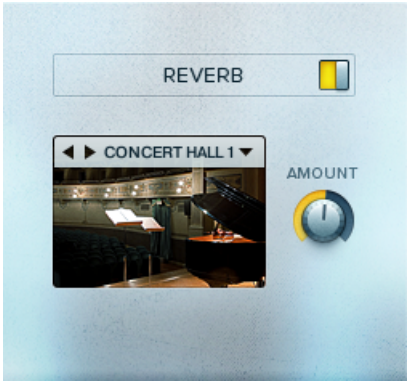
- OFF: a flat response.
- 1: boosts the high frequencies for a brighter sound.
- 2: cuts the mid frequencies, while also boosting both the high and low frequencies. This gives a more present and larger sound.

The DYNAMICS effect features one switch:

- PUMP: activating this switch in turn activates a combination of envelope and compression processing to make the output signal sound louder and fatter.

REVERB

The right side of the page contains the reverb effect.



The Reverb Controls

This is a convolution based effect that uses impulse responses to simulate real acoustic spaces.

- The effect can be switched on or off by using the switch to the right of the main label.

You can select an impulse response by either:

- selecting one specifically from the dropdown menu,
- or by cycling through them using the left and right arrows.
- The AMOUNT knob controls the level of the reverb effect signal.

4 Using the Instrument.nki

The Instrument.nki can be considered a simplified version of the Ensemble.nki, or a hybrid of the Ensemble and Hits Instruments.

You can use it to load an ensemble, ensemble section, or single instrument, and then play a selection of rhythmic patterns and single hits.

4.1 Mapping and Playback

The Instrument.nki is used mainly to trigger and play rhythmic patterns, but also contains single hits to accent or end these patterns.

As such, the Instrument uses the following MIDI mapping:

- **C2** and **D2** trigger single hits
- **E2** to **B2** trigger rolls and flams (where applicable - not all instruments include a full set of rolls or flams)
- **C3** to **G5** trigger rhythmic patterns

4.2 Controlling Expression and Accents

► To control the dynamics of the rhythms in real-time, use the modulation wheel (Mod Wheel, MIDI controller 1) of your MIDI keyboard, or move the modulation wheel of KONTAKT's on-screen keyboard.

► To set the dynamics to a fixed value, use the ModW. slider to the top left of the user interface.

Note that you cannot automate this control as it could interfere with the Mod Wheel signal.

You can adjust the intensity of the rhythmic accents by using the MIDI Pitch Bend control:

- moving the pitch bend up will increase the intensity of the accents.
- moving the pitch bend down will decrease the intensity of the accents.
- leaving the pitch bend control in a neutral position will set the intensity of the accents to the default value.

► As with the Mod Wheel, you can also set the accent intensity to a fixed value by using the PitchW. slider to the top left of the user interface.

4.3 The Instrument User Interface

The Instrument User Interface

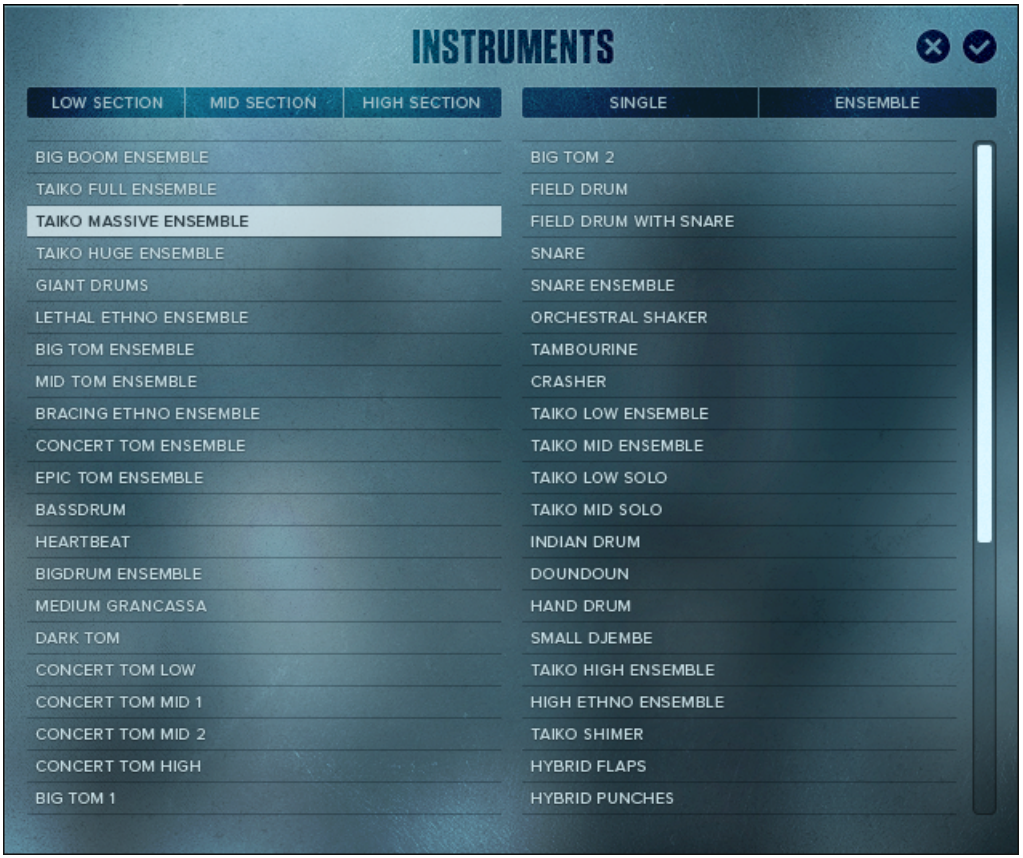
4.3.1 Browsing and Loading Instruments

You can cycle though instruments, or open the Instruments Browser from either the INSTRUMENT box in the top right, or from the main banner.

► Clicking on the arrows in either section will cycle through the available instruments.

The Instruments Browser

► The Instruments Browser is accessed by clicking on the magnifying glass button in either the INSTRUMENT box or the main banner.



The Instruments Browser

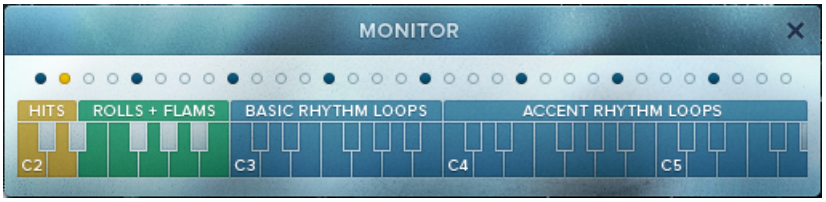
The Instruments Browser is a lot like the Rhythm Sets Browser from the Ensemble nki:

- You can refine the browser contents using the buttons at the top.
- You select an instrument or ensemble by clicking on its name.
- You load the instrument by clicking on the **Tick** button, or exit by clicking on the **X** button.
- The only difference is that this browser is used to select and load sounds, rather than patterns.

4.3.2 The Monitor

► The Monitor Window is opened by clicking on the i button in the main banner.

The Monitor Window displays an illustration of the MIDI Key Mapping, as well as a simplified notation of the currently selected rhythmic pattern, represented as dots above the keyboard.



The Monitor Window

4.3.3 The PLAYBACK Page

By clicking on the PLAYBACK Tab, you will display the Playback page.

The Playback Page

This page contains three settings that affect the way the phrases are played back in the KONTAKT Instrument:

- TRIGGER MODE: There are two Trigger Modes, selected by clicking on the two buttons. These modes are:
  - PHRASE SYNC: Newly triggered phrases will have their start position offset to match the currently playing phrases, making sure that everything plays in sync.
  - FREE TRIGGER: Newly triggered phrases are always triggered from the beginning, ignoring the current playback position of any currently playing loops.
- FEEL: The 16TH SWING knob in this area controls the amount of delay applied to the off beat hits. Increasing this control can make the rhythm feel more laid-back, or even give it a triplet feel.
- TEMPO: Here you can select between 3 tempo ratios 1/2 (Half), 1:1 (Normal), or x2 (Double), which affect the phrase playback speed relative to the master (or host) tempo.

4.3.4 The EFFECTS Page

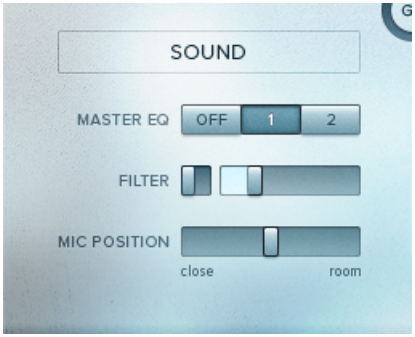
You can access the Effects Page by clicking on the EFFECTS tab at the bottom of the interface.

The Effects Page

This page gives you access to simple and intuitive effects to quickly shape the sound of the instrument.

SOUND

The left side of the page contains the sound controls, which comprise of two effects, MASTER EQ and FILTER, as well as a MIC POSITION slider.



The Sound Controls

The MASTER EQ gives you a choice between three EQ settings:

- OFF: a flat response.
- 1: boosts the lower frequencies for a heavier sound.
- 2: boosts the higher frequencies for a brighter, more cutting sound.

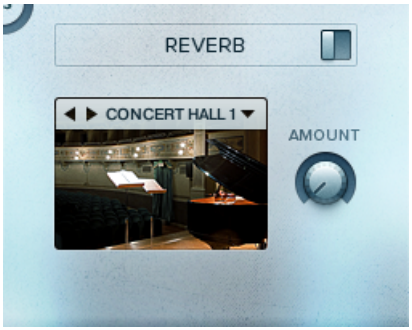
The FILTER effect is a band pass filter, which can be used for extreme tonal effects. It has two controls:

- The switch turns the effect on or off.
- The slider controls the central frequency of the band pass filter.

The MIC POSITION slider controls the balance between the close and room microphone sources.

REVERB

The right side of the page contains the reverb effect.



The Reverb Controls

This is a convolution based effect that uses impulse responses to simulate real acoustic spaces.

- The effect can be switched on or off by using the switch to the right of the main label.

You can select an impulse response by either:

- selecting one specifically from the dropdown menu,
- or by cycling through them using the left and right arrows.
- The AMOUNT knob controls the level of the reverb effect signal.

5 Credits

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